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Person Interviewed: Sandlin Mackye Gwen
Full Name Last First Middle
Known by any other names? (list) _____
Date of Birth 9.1.1953

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Person as Subjects within the Interview:

<u>Husband</u>	<u>Sandlin</u>	<u>Dan</u>	<u>—</u>	
Title	Last Name	First	Middle	DOB

Events as Subjects within the Interview:

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Specific	Date(s)

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State	County	City/Community	Time Period/Years
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Other Notes: _____

Interview with Mackye Sandlin

Interviewer: Nikka Kellam

Date of Interview: 3/21/12

Biography

Mrs. Mackye Sandlin was born on September 1, 1953 and raised in Western Kentucky, where later she followed her sister's footsteps into the world of Harding University of Searcy, Arkansas in the 70's. She initially planned on returning to Kentucky, but after marrying Don Sandlin in which both of them settled into teaching jobs, they decided to make Beebe, Arkansas home. The Sandlin's have lived in Arkansas for about 35 years and grew their family of two children, Mac and Robyn, both of which are married. Mac and his wife Jenni have two children as well, Elijah and Josie. All of the Sandlin family attends Beebe Church of Christ where Mackye is also a deacon's wife. Mrs. Mackye has been in the education work field since graduating from Harding and is currently the librarian at Beebe middle school. Those interesting in hearing of simple life in a small town Arkansas and family values in such a beautiful place will love Mackye and her stories.

Kellam: Okay, we're going to start. I just wanted to start of asking what is was like when you first came to Arkansas and your first thoughts of Arkansas compared to where you grew up first. So....

Sandlin: Like when I lived here? Not when I came to Harding?

Kellam: Right

Sandlin: Well living in the Searcy area it felt much more suburban or much more urban, because I grew up in a little tiny town in western Kentucky and it's like 45 miles away from anything big. I thought Searcy was huge at the time even though it was probably 10,000 people and I never really thought we would stay in Arkansas, because I always wanted to go back to Kentucky, but we both got jobs here and we just kept staying until it felt like home.

Kellam: What was the education system like when you came into Harding? What were your expectations of Harding?

Sandlin: Well my sister had gone to Harding and I had visited her quite a bit while she was down here, but I always knew I wanted to be here, but of course when it was time to come I was a nervous wreck, because as I said there were fewer than 60 people in my graduating class, so I felt like I was coming to a big place. We moved in on a Sunday morning and on the first day everybody starting saying "hi", "how are you" and it just felt just right. Of course I was dating Don already so I knew people that way a little bit. But I loved the – I wasn't a great student – but I loved being in classes where you were challenged and were you had to think. I remember I had Mr. Joe C. Graves, he may be a doctor I don't know, for American History and that was the first time I had ever been presented with anything except that America was always right and it was just fascinating and I had Dr. Joe Cleveland for an honors English course I just thought she

was the most brilliant person in the world. It was challenging but it made me feel very sophisticated I guess at the same time.

Kellam: Yeah, as far as school and I mean being at Christian University. What is the difference that you'd say now between Harding and just the surrounding area in Searcy, like what is the difference between Searcy now then it was back then?

Sandlin: Well you know Harding has progressed to be not more liberal I guess but I guess not having as many rules as it did when I was there. For example, you had to be in the dorm every night by 10:00 and 11:00 on the weekends unless you had special permission, so that's a big change. Of course there's another thing, the food was so much better you have so many opportunities for good food and of course it's larger and much more and it's probably nicer. You know there were a lot of older buildings still when I was there and all of the ones where I had classes have been re-done since I graduated. Where the nursing department is, those were just old classrooms with high ceilings and wood floors. I loved that building, and the American Studies building has been re-done since I was there, so there are a lot of physical differences, but you know when I go to chapel and hear kids singing and stuff I still think it's probably just got the same values at heart as it did when I was there. I hope so anyway.

Kellam: Yeah, as far as Searcy goes, like living in Searcy, what was that like?

Sandlin: Well we lived in a little community called Morning Sun, do you know where that is? When you get on the interstate on Main Street? If you don't get on the interstate and keep coming all the way over the overpass there's a skating rink out there, you might have gone skating out there.

Kellam: Yes, across the bridge?

Sandlin: Yes, that's Morning Sun and when Don and I got married we lived in Married Sun Apartments, the old old ones that have been torn down now, and he drove a bus route from Beebe and it was on that highway, so he passed this empty house everyday and it had a little bit of acreage, maybe two acres with it and a little barn. He just thought that would be the greatest thing because we could be close to his bus route and we could have critters. So, we lived there the first year and looking back it was almost like being in limbo. It was the first year that I taught school and we had started coming to church over here because we were both working over here, but we still had a good couple that had taken us under their wings so we still had them over there that we visited with. So, I had just graduated so most of my friends that I ran around with were gone. So, really, living in Searcy, I mean Morning Sun really felt like a transition year I guess, because we just stayed there for about hardly a year and then we moved to Beebe and we've been here ever since.

Kellam: Was your first job – what was your first job?

Sandlin: After I got out of college? I began teaching school in Beebe, Arkansas.

Kellam: As soon as you got out?

Sandlin: Sure did. Don had been teaching for two years and I had taken a job. McRae had their own school at the time and I thought I was gonna teach there, but the high school principal had told Don, at Beebe, to have me come over. They had an English teacher quit, so I just walked right in to ninth grade English. It was horrifying.

Kellam: Was the school a lot different from where you were from? The people?

Sandlin: It was not, because you know then Beebe was still very small and we were in an old building that was build the same year I was born and we went to the ball games, very similar, lots of community support, so except for not really knowing how to teach school – how to teach

ninth graders, we just kind of fit right in, and the school secretary was a good friend of ours at church already. So that was what really made the transition fairly easy.

Kellam: Well since then what jobs have you had?

Sandlin: We are very dull people Nikka. I have taught English. I taught English for three years, and I stayed home when I had Robyn and I substituted and taught GED classes then and then I went back and taught eleventh grade journalism and ninth grade half a day and then 7th grade that year, then I taught all ninth grade and then I became librarian and I have been librarian ever since.

Kellam: Are there any difference in the kids or the culture?

Sandlin: Yes, yes

Kellam: How so?

Sandlin: Well the big thing, and I saw this all the time, which makes me feel really old. When I began teaching, you had few parents that felt like you were picking on their kid or they didn't get what they deserved, we just had a few of those, but most of the parents were very supportive. "I want my kid to do what you tell them to do", were behind you 100%, and really had a lot of respect for teachers, and I was say that that has just completely reversed and now the majority, I think, of our parents are now on a more adversarial relationship. They're on the defensive most of the time and it makes me really sad.

Kellam: Is it a lot better in a librarian position than a teaching position, just being because of how the kids have changed?

Sandlin: Oh yes, and well the best thing about it is, no papers to grade! I don't have a fixed schedule so that's a good thing, so I can do something different everyday you know and I love love love helping find books for kids to read. Its just a lot more freedom. The frustrating

thing for me right now is you know how technology is changing and everything, and I really don't want to learn it all, but I'm really not eager but I'm watching how our profession is going to evolve.

Kellam: Well I'm an education major and they're talking about how some schools are not going to have books. It's going to be all iPads and all that stuff, so it's just different.

Sandlin: I don't see that happening in small schools right away but for example, the encyclopedia Britannica is going out of print, and they've been printing the encyclopedia's since 1700 and something of course we've been using them online for several years. I haven't bought a new set of encyclopedias in over ten years. I'll probably get rid of those this year, but I don't know about just books for pleasure. I don't know how quickly they will fade from our libraries, but I wouldn't be surprised at all to say that's not true.

Kellam: Yeah, in my emergent lit class we read this book that was similar to *Goodnight Moon*, but it was *Goodnight iPad*. It's by the same writer, but it was just talking about how it's evolved and it's not a book anymore, it's iPad's, and turning off technology and stuff like that, so that was really neat. As far as schools go, have you been at the same school the whole time?

Sandlin: Well it's not the same building, but it's the same school system. I started out in the high school when it was nine through twelve. Then they built a new building and moved the junior high to seven, eight, and nine for many years. Then they built another building and made it just eighth and ninth. Then they changed again and now they are nine and ten, but our eleventh and twelfth graders go back and forth between the eleventh and twelfth building, so really it's more like nine through twelve again.

Kellam: Is it because of growth? Has it grown a lot since...

Sandlin: We've over doubled our school population since we started.

Kellam: Really? Is the town like that too? Has Beebe grown a lot since you moved here?

Sandlin: Yes.

Kellam: As far as being in Beebe in general, how has it been raising your kids here?

Sandlin: I think it's great. I mean we really are just converts. You know, have you even seen the sign that says your hometown?

Kellam: Yes!

Sandlin: Your dream hometown? That's us! You know my kids went to school here grades kindergarten through twelve, of course we knew all their teachers personally and they were right there on campus with us. Now when Robyn came through there was not as strong a youth group. When Mac came through school there was a really good bunch of kids, like seven of them, I think six or seven graduated from our just from our church together. But I was thinking, he was part of a big group of boys that were really good boys. They did their normal teenage stuff, but they were really – they all went to church, they all respected their parents and it was a good place to raise kids. It has been.

Kellam: I mean know because I came from a really small town and I always pictures myself going back and being around there. Is it like that for a lot of people around here? Do a lot of people stay just because of the hometown feel?

Sandlin: Actually we do have several of our former students who've come back and have been teaching at the school and I think that's the case. And of course part of it is, as opposed to where I grew up, we are so close to Little Rock and Searcy and we have a lot more access to what we did when I was a kid, so we had the opportunity to take them to cultural stuff and better shopping and that kind of thing and it not being not a lot of trouble. I think so, it's basically been a built-in

community. Although there is not a lot of industry, but people like to live here because it's a good place to have their kids.

Kellam: As far as churches go, have there been a lot of churches that have grown and come through? You've been at the same church, right?

Sandlin: We have. Of course you know about our recent struggle and I think it's been interesting. The Methodist church in town has always been the traditional, richer church. More people, I guess the upper crust went to and the first Baptist was really large but they have had kind of an exodus out to another Baptist church, and it's really really large and active, but our church has stayed steady. When we first came here, maybe within the first five years, a group that was opposed to mission work and fellowship hall, and I really didn't really feel that a lot, because I didn't really know them and they just usually came for a little while and they'd come and then they'd leave, but they started a congregation. I can't really tell you how large it was, but some people, a few people that were members of our church went out there, and they have recently split within the last five years or so.

Kellam: Really?

Sandlin: So there's two of what we call eighty congregations, then I'm not sure how this going to workout with our people that have left us. They want to build a building. They did not want to go to either one of those churches. I counted up last weekend and we probably lost about seventy-five people.

Kellam: Really? Do you think religious wise it's just hard because of tradition.

Sandlin: Yes.

Kellam: Yes, because that's how my church is at home. I mean my family's a lot of the younger generation of course and so there have been times that it's come up to stuff like that, so it's interesting to see the similar struggles.

Sandlin: Well a part of our trouble was our preacher, Larry Treadwell has been preaching there for 35 years, so the day he said he was going to retire I knew there were going to be people who would probably leave, but you know whoever we got was not going to suit everybody, and looking back now there's blame to go around. If we've done this differently or done this differently, I think it began with what they considered doctrinal issues: clapping, praying for the babies and that kind of stuff that really several of them do object to on what they think is a scriptural level. And then when everybody didn't respond to them the way they had hoped, I think it became much more personal and I think we're on the up-swing now, I really do, to me, we've been to a couple funerals and weddings and stuff. And it's really hard to see them and know how to interact.

Kellam: I mean this part of Arkansas reminds me of home, and for Cassie too, which is why we came to this church, because it reminded us of home, because my town is really small and it's a lot of the people that are reason I love home which makes sense, but that's why I like this part of Arkansas.

Sandlin: We were talking, we took a long leisurely trip to Tyler on Friday, you know, and it was just so pretty, such a great area. Great little towns just like around here.

Kellam: Was there ever a time that you thought Arkansas really wasn't the place that you wanted to be after you'd be here for a little while?

Sandlin: Well when I first graduated and got that first job in Beebe, yes I had always dreamed that we would go back to Kentucky, and Don was going to help my daddy farm in the summers

after school. In fact he went and applied for jobs up there a couple years in a row and we'd go stay with mommy and daddy, while he helped Daddy in the summertime the first few years.

Robyn was a baby, so my sister called and there was a science opening and I was thinking, oh I don't think I want to go. So anyway, I think God was just taking care of us, because that little church, the church that I grew up with closed down.

Kellam: Really?

Sandlin: They ended up with my sister, mother, and two older gentlemen, and there was a little old couple that came some. They drive to another little town and it's just been a wonderful place for them to be. But I just didn't want to raise my kids in that little church and it was very similar to the situation here but doubly so. Our church in town had the reputation that we were the only one's going to heaven. And they never appointed elders, and the church just never grew and I think that's why.

Kellam: Being so close to Little Rock, has Little Rock grown a lot?

Sandlin: Ah yes. Out from downtown. When we first started going there we would still shop in downtown Little Rock, but they built McCain mall I think a year before I graduated and it was brand new.

Kellam: And when was that?

Sandlin: I graduated in 75, so that was a big deal. We had never even seen a mall. The interstate was fairly new to Little Rock and it's just expanded and expanded. And all that area in west Little Rock. I don't know if you ever go out there to shop? You know where the Rave Theater is?

Kellam: Yes I do, I'm going there Saturday!

Sandlin: What are you gonna go see?

Kellam: The Hunger Games.

Sandlin: I'm going to take my library club to see that on Tuesday! 120 kids!

Kellam: Really? Oh wow!

Sandlin: But anyway that area out there is just phenomenal, and Cabot, it was about like Beebe was when we got here, but a lot of that is because of the schools in Little Rock. A lot of people just kept moving out and put their kids in different schools, because they had so much uproar down there.

Kellam: Well I observed at Little Rock Central. Have you been there?

Sandlin: How'd that work out for you?

Kellam: I had never been to a school like that. I mean, even when we went to the Dallas Area, when I played basketball and stuff like that, I hadn't been in a school like that, but just because of the culture difference. But I just wanted to ask even though you weren't here when that happened, did you know a lot about the Little Rock desegregation?

Sandlin: No, not til I probably got out of school and started listening to the news, because they were still in a desegregation movement, so every year that would all be a big deal, but I really wasn't aware of it when I was growing up at all.

Kellam: But when you got here did you learn more about it just considering-

Sandlin: No I didn't. In the last few years I've learned a lot more about it, because a couple of teachers have done research projects with their kids on that, so I got a lot of material on it and did a lot of study on it.

Kellam: Interesting. Just because there were not a lot of African-Americans at my school and I never knew that that was the first place for education where they desegregated. So I when I went there to observe, it's crazy because majority of them are African-American, which is interesting

to me, and even though the school is kind of rough. I think it's a really great mission opportunity. I mean I had a girl smart off to me and I was just observing, so I guess I look really young, so she probably just thought I was their age and she just kind of smarted off to me which was interesting. Even so it looks really run down and it's just interesting to learn about the education system.

Sandlin: Right, and I didn't think about how that all occurred. I thought they just decided to go to school one day and went to school, but it was a big – and there were lots of adults planning on that and taking care of that. It's just amazing and it's just horrifying, horrifying to read those different books that the people who lived different and it's given me a new perspective. We integrated our little school when I was in the seventh grade and there were five kids that graduated with us and we all thought we were buddies. We didn't run around together but we all felt like we were like them and they were like us, but none of the five have ever been back for a reunion, so I've often wondered how they really felt.

Kellam: Really? Well as far as encountering racial issues, I mean it was bigger when you were back in Kentucky, but when you got here were their people – because I know that in some towns in Texas, schools that we played where still stuck in that.

Sandlin: There hardly any black people in Cabot.

Kellam: Really?!

Sandlin: Yes. When Robyn worked at Wal-Mart down there she was horrified to find out that people still felt that way.

Kellam: So it is like that?

Sandlin: Now in Beebe we've never had any real racial trouble, and it's a small minority, maybe like four percent, but in the years that I've been teaching I have seen that change so much.

It really is. And when I came to Harding that's an interesting thing. There weren't a lot of black people there but there were several basketball players and there was a certain group of girls who wanted to date them and that caused a lot of controversy in those days. When we first came to Beebe, in the early years, they had a bus program and we picked up a lot of little children in the African-American neighborhood and we had several adults being baptized and there was an older couple who left over one of those people. They left our congregation. Sure did.

Kellam: Really? That's so scary, and you think it's a lot of years removed but there are some people that it doesn't matter. One of my best friend's, her grandparents, it's very hard for her grandparents. When we were in high school and we had games and there were some teams where there were a lot of African-Americans, but I didn't even think that way, because we didn't grow up that way.

Sandlin: And we never felt like we were prejudice at all, but Mac tells me that there's one of our good friends at church and he'd always help with Bible school and Lads to Leaders and Mac said that we always made him call the adults Mr. and Mrs. but didn't make him call him Mr. Virgil, and I can't remember that at all.

Kellam: That's interesting that he remembers that. As far as important events go, I don't know where you were at, but where were you and what did you think when JFK was assassinated?

Sandlin: I was in the fifth grade and I'll tell you what I thought about it at the time. They had all the televisions covered so we couldn't watch cartoons. That was big deal to me at ten years of age, but I can remember vividly how I found out about it. The janitor came around at a certain time in the afternoon to empty the trash cans and he opened the door and told us that the president had been killed. I will never forget that, and you know I remember it was very solemn

thing and we're not a real political family, I don't know where Mac came from. My parents were not big political people but it was a sobering thing, very sobering for a little thing.

Kellam: Well here's another president I'll ask about because he was a famous Arkansan, what are your thoughts about Bill Clinton?

Sandlin: Well, they've changed over the years. You may not know this, but he instituted a major educational reform when he was governor here and I'm very thankful for because that's when they required every school to have a certified librarian and I admired him for that. I didn't like him as a governor, because I thought he was an immoral person and I still think he is an immoral person, but of course I was horrified by all his behavior in the White House, but at the same time he balanced the budget and he did a lot of really good things. I've read a lot about him just to try to reconcile most things with his lack of good character I'd guess you'd say. I think of him lot more of a president than we he was actually in office, but I don't have any respect for him as a person. Does that make sense?

Kellam: Yes. As far as knowledge goes of people in Arkansas do you know a lot about any of these people: Winston Rockefeller, Orval Faubus or Johnny Cash?

Sandlin: Well I know a little bit about Johnny Cash because my husband loved him and he saw what's that movie? With Reese Witherspoon?

Kellam: *Walk the Line*? I haven't seen.

Sandlin: I don't know as much about Rockefeller as I probably should, because you know he was a big deal. Orval Faubus I didn't know much about him except with the Little Rock Nine Crisis until I started reading about that, and he was actually married to – his second wife was from Beebe, so I heard people talk about him, but until I got to studying about the Little Rock Nine I didn't know much about him.

Kellam: What do you know about that?

Sandlin: Now here's the deal, when he ran for governor whatever term that was. He was going to follow the federal law to integrate with all due speed but when it came time to do it he absolutely refused, because of his supporters I'm sure. I guess he was very popular with lots of people, but it seemed to me like he was pretty much a crook, and you know Johnny Cash I knew about him when I was growing up, even though we weren't much of country fans.

Kellam: See I didn't know that he was from Arkansas.

Sandlin: I didn't either 'til – well I don't know when I found out. I'd lived here for a long while before I knew that.

Kellam: Well do you have a favorite entertainer that's out of Arkansas or an athlete? Are you a razorback fan? Just as far as all of that sports – all the favorite stuff.

Sandlin: Now I'm not a sports person, but I do like basketball. I watch that with Don quite a bit and I went to my first Razorback basketball game this year and it was so exciting and so now I'm going to be a fan of the basketball team. I really loved Eddie Sutton when he was coaching here, we loved watching his teams and that's when the kids and we really watching him a lot, the basketball. I don't care about the rest of it really and truly. Let me think entertainer. When I was in high school Glen Campbell was a big deal and he's from Arkansas so, I liked him. Is there anyone else?

Kellam: Let me think. I also found out that, what's his name, Jerry Jones – I didn't know he was from here, he's from Arkansas.

Sandlin: The Dallas Cowboys Manager. Yes.

Kellam: And there's a more recent one, Kris Allen and he was from –

Sandlin: Conway, I mean I think he was born in Jacksonville, which is where he's from originally.

Kellam: And that's funny, because I'm not an idol fan.

Sandlin: I'm not either

Kellam: I don't really watch idol, but one of his songs was our graduation song.

Sandlin: Really?

Kellam: Usually it's a big deal to the class, their song, but no one really cared and we actually wanted a Disney song but they were like, this is really for your parents and they aren't going to want to hear that and someone just picked and ended up that it was Kris Allen and I saw his name on the sign when I was driving into school one time, so that was really interesting.

Sandlin: When they were voting for it the kids talked about it all the time and one of my good friends that I teach with was a big fan and she would tell me every week about how he was doing, so it was interesting, and I ought to know more people who are from Arkansas, and we used to have Arkansas history in our building when it was eighth grade and I had an Arkansas collection - everything that was written by an Arkansas author, but I sent it to the junior high when we moved. I'm trying to think. Well Maya Angelou, do you know her? Well she read her own poetry of hers at Bill Clinton's inauguration, she's a poet and she's kind of a big deal. I can't think of another soul.

Kellam: Well just in general is there anything that may seem miniscule that people may not know, historically that's happened since you've been in Arkansas. Something that the whole nation may not know, but something that affected you or something that you'll always remember.

Sandlin: Well that Education Reform Act really did have a big impact on our careers, on mine particularly, because not only did they require you to be certified but you had to have a master's degree, and I never would have done that if Clinton hadn't passed that and it really brought up our pay standards and they really had to make an effort to make more equitable pay for teachers, so that was kind of a big deal and I guess Huckabee running for president – or trying to run- that was kind of a big deal too because he used to sponsor, when he was Lieutenant governor then became governor, he sponsored our band marching contest so I talked to him and met him every year for awhile so that was kind of fun to know someone that I had actually talked to trying to run for president. I'm trying to think. I'm terrible at pop culture.

Kellam: Oh no it's okay. It's interesting to me because I never knew a lot about Arkansas. My first time to come was the first time I visited, my Junior year, and you wouldn't think that, because it's so close.

Sandlin: Well I didn't have to take a class in Arkansas History the many years ago and I really wish I had. I'm always gathering up little books and in fact I got one that I – I can't remember where I got it now – but it was just short little snippets of Arkansas History, and I was fascinated by a lot of that because there were two or three significant civil war battles I didn't know about until fairly recently. I should know more about it. It's one of the things that I love about it is it's such a pretty state and it's got a wide variety of landscapes. I don't like the flat land in the Delta, but it's interesting just the same.

Kellam: Well thank you for answering my questions!

Sandlin: Oh honey you're welcome. I don't know if I've told you anything you need to know or not.

Kellam: No, no that's great.

Sandlin: If I think of something historically important I'll let you know. I certainly never thought that I would stay in Arkansas because you know you have the reputation of having back woods hicks but sometime when you go to Wal-Mart and the grocery store you'd probably think that's true but it's been home to us.